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FACTS and OBSERVATIONS

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RELATIVE TO THE

COINAGE and CIRCULATION

OF

COUNTERFEIT or BASE MONEY;

WITH SUGGESTIONS

FOR

REMEDYING THE EVIL.

LONDON:

Printed by H. FRY, No. 8, Middle-Moorfields.

1795.

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CONCERNING THE CIRCULATION

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THE vast increase, and the extensive circulation of base Money, particularly within the last two or three years, is too obvious not to have attracted the notice of all ranks in the community: and the evil has at length become so enormous as to call aloud for a remedy.

After a very laborious and minute investigation, founded on information derived from a variety of different sources, it appears that this nefarious traffic is carried to a height which almost exceeds credibility.

The names, and in many instances even the places of abode have been lately collected of 120
A persons

persons in London and in the Country, who principally support themselves at present by coining and dealing in base Money of different kinds; and to such a pitch of dexterity have these criminal people arrived, that it has now become extremely difficult for the common observer to distinguish the counterfeited Coin in circulation from the worn-out Silver of the Mint.

This deception has, in addition to other facilities and encouragements, tended in an eminent degree to the amazing extent of the circulation which is at present experienced.

The principal laws relative to counterfeit Coin having been made above a century ago, the tricks and devices of modern times are not in many instances provided for, and hence it is that the Country is deluged with base Money.

While the profit is so immense, with so many chances of escaping punishment: and even where no punishment at all attaches to several offences which were not foreseen a century ago, it is scarce to be wondered that the coinage and traffic in counterfeit Money has attracted the attention of so many criminal people.

The great dealers, who in most instances are the employers of the Coiners, execute orders for the
town

town and country trade with as much system and regularity as is practised by manufacturers in any regular branch of trade.

Scarce a waggon departs from the metropolis that does not carry boxes and parcels to the different camps, sea-ports, and manufacturing towns : and in London regular markets are held by the principal dealers, where *Fraudulent Hawkers, Pedlars, Wandering Horse Dealers, Servants of Toll Gatherers, Hackney Coachmen, Publicans, Market Women, Fruit Women, Barrow Women, Fish Cryers, Rabbit Sellers, Unlicensed Lottery Office Keepers, Itinerant Jews, Irish Labourers, Small Shopkeepers*, and many others who would not be suspected, are regularly supplied with counterfeit Copper and Silver, with the advantage of nearly 100 per cent in their favour ; and sometimes more or less according to the quality of the article, and the excellence of the workmanship.

Through these various channels vast quantities of base Money gets into general circulation, while the Mint Coinage is in many instances hoarded up : for certain it is that an evident diminution of the current Silver Coin of the Realm is apparent to every common observer.

It is impossible to reflect on the alternative to which all ranks in society are reduced, of receiving and again uttering Money which is known to be

false and counterfeit, without lamenting that by thus familiarizing the mind to fraud and deception, the moral principle is destroyed.

Every person who has the least intercourse with society, must in the nature of things receive base Money : and being thus cheated, the party injured must knowingly and wilfully cheat in his turn : and it is much to be feared that when this species of fraud becomes familiar to young minds, it may extend to other transactions in life : The barrier once broke down in one part, the moral principle moulders in others ; and infinite mischief is the result to the very best interests of society.

To permit the existence of a Silver and Copper Coinage such as is now in circulation, is to tolerate fraud and deception in all ranks of the community, to the disgrace of the National Character, and to the ultimate loss of many individuals. For the evil must have an end at some period, and then thousands must suffer, with this difference, that the longer it continues the greater will be the loss of property.

But the mischief at present is not merely confined to the counterfeiting of Coin similar to that of the Realm. The avarice and ingenuity of man is constantly finding out new sources of fraud, and new and artful devices, insomuch that in London,

don, Birmingham, and the neighbourhood, coinages of *Louis D'ors*, *Half Johannes*, *French Crowns*, *Half Crowns*, and *Shillings*, as well as several Coins of Flanders, Germany, and other Countries, are going forward without any dread of punishment on the part of those concerned, who certainly have no idea that they are guilty of misprision of High Treason, by the Act of the 14th of Elizabeth.

Nor is the evil confined to the foreign Coins of Europe, since a Coinage of the Star Pagoda of Arcot of the intrinsic value of about three halfpence each has been established in London for some years, and forms an article of commerce to India, to mix with the current Pagodas of the Country, which are of the value of Eight Shillings sterling.

The Sequins of Turkey, a Gold Coin also, worth about Five or Six Shillings, have in like manner been recently counterfeited in London. Thus extending the frauds of these criminal people to every quarter of the world, while the disgrace of the British name is through this medium proclaimed even in the most distant regions of India. And it is greatly to be lamented that persons even in superior stations in life, with some pretensions to honor and integrity, have suffered their avarice so far to get the better of the moral principle, as to be concerned in this abominable traffic.

In the course of investigating these multifarious frauds upon the public, it has recently been discovered that the following is a pretty correct account of a considerable number of the principal Coiners, Die-Sinkers, and Dealers in London and the Country.

IN LONDON.

	Persons.
1. Coiners of Shillings, Sixpences, Half-pence, Farthings, Guineas, Half Guineas, French money, Portuguese money, German money, Pagodas, &c. - - - - -	39
2. Die-Sinkers, and persons who mill or flatten the metal - - - - -	5
3. Large Dealers, who employ the Coiners and sell in wholesale - - - - -	18
4. Smaller Dealers, who are supplied by the larger ones - - - - -	23
	—85

IN BIRMINGHAM AND THE NEIGHBOURHOOD.

1. Coiners of British and Foreign money as above	20
2. Dealers, who supply the Country and the Metropolis - - - - -	15
	—35

Total 120

Besides

Besides these, whose names and places of residence are generally known, (and of which the Author of these Observations has an alphabetical list) there are a multitude of low people, chiefly Irish and Jews, who are employed in the metropolis, in circulating base Silver and Copper Money; and it will scarce be credited that of these criminal people who have either been detected, prosecuted, or convicted within the last seven years, there stands upon the register kept by the Solicitor to the Mint no less than 608 names.

But numerous as this phalanx appears to be, it bears no proportion to the multitude in this great metropolis, and in different parts of the country, who chiefly support themselves by uttering base Money; to accomplish which purpose there is not a trick or device within the reach of human ingenuity which is not practised.

It is impossible to form any judgment as to the extent of the coinage and circulation of base Money yearly: but when it is considered, that two persons can finish from 200l. to 300l. a week in base Silver, and that three people within the same period will stamp to the like amount in Copper, and when the number of known Coiners are taken into the calculation, the aggregate in the course of a year must be immense. It may possibly

fibly extend to 200,000l. a year, or it may be more or less. *

Yet enormous as the evil appears to be, the remedy is by no means so difficult as may appear at first view.

In developing the causes of the mischief, they will be found to arise from two sources:—"1. The
 " want of legislative regulations applicable to the
 " new and modernized state of the frauds that are
 " committed, and which the laws now in being will
 " not reach: and 2. The want of pecuniary re-
 " source for the purpose of creating that vigor and
 " energy in the police, which is necessary for the
 " detection of this species of offence, which re-
 " quires a vast deal of previous attention for the
 " purpose of making discoveries, as well as the
 " necessary purchases of Money which shall be
 " sufficient to convict the offenders."

These two objects once attained, with the assistance of an active Magistracy, the evil would very soon cease to exist.

* A noted and well-known Coiner, who lately made some important and useful discoveries, acknowledged to a Magistrate of the Police, that he and his wife alone had coined to the extent of £200,000 in Counterfeit Half Crowns, besides other Money, in a period of seven years.

As

As the law now stands, the following deficiencies are apparent and require a legislative remedy.

1. Prosecutions are at present limited to three months, which may often defeat justice where offences committed in the Country frequently cannot be tried in less than four, five, and in some cases nearly six months. ¶ The limitation should be six months.
2. The words *Milled Money* seems necessary by the Act of 8 and 9 William III. to form the description of Coin similar to the current Coin of the Realm, which is erroneous and should be left out, inasmuch as a considerable proportion of the counterfeit Coin is *cast* and *not milled*. ¶ The description should be general—*Milled* or *not Milled*.
3. No provision is made in any Act, and consequently no punishment for the offence of *buying base Money to recolour it*: which is a modern device which no existing law reaches. ¶ This offence should be punished with transportation, or confinement in a penitentiary house.
4. Neither is any provision made for the offence of *uttering base Money in exchange* as well as payment. ¶ Both offences being the same, should be punished alike.
5. No existing law gives any power to Magistrates upon information on oath to search for, or seize counterfeit Coin, in the hands or premises of *known dealers*, or *reputed utterers*; although these dealers are now the persons (and not the actual Coiners) who keep the

the base Money: neither is there any power to seize base Money conveying in coaches or waggons going into the Country. Under this shelter the dealers are enabled to hold markets for sale in their houses, where they keep large stocks, and base Money is also sent into the Country without the least hazard of detection or seizure. ¶ Surely this should be otherwise regulated.

6. No power is given by any existing Law, even upon the most pointed information, to search the houses or workshops of Coiners *in the night time*. Hence it is that *detection* becomes so difficult, and the evil increases, because the Law in some measure shields the Offenders from discovery. If in Lottery offences (which are certainly greatly inferior in their enormity to Coining) a power is granted to break open houses in the night time, surely no reason can be assigned why treasonable offences in Coining base Money, should not in this respect be on the same footing. ¶ Unless there is a power to search in the night, and suddenly to force open doors or windows, it will be impossible to detect the Makers of Cast Money.
7. The Laws relative to the Copper Coinage, although more modern, have also been found to be extremely defective, and totally inadequate to the object the Legislature had in view.

The Act of the 11th of his present Majesty indeed makes it felony to sell Copper Money of the similitude *of the current Money of the Realm* at a less value

value than the denomination doth import, but the benefit of Clergy not being taken away, and no specific punishment being mentioned, the Offenders are subject only to a year's imprisonment, which proves no check whatever, as their families carry on the business in the mean time; and if they chuse to sell *plain Half-pence*, or what is called *Irish harps*, or to mix them with *stamped Half-pence* similar to the current Coin of the Realm, so that the stamped Coin does not exceed the value of what the denomination imports, it is doubtful whether the conviction will not fail.  *The punishment should be made Transportation, and there should be no distinction of Copper Money, whether Harps or Plain, or whatever the device may be which is upon them.*

8. The Act above mentioned gives a power to Magistrates to issue their warrants to search in the day time for tools and implements used in the *Copper Coinage*, (with regard to Silver or Gold Coinage no such power is given) and what is very singular, *no punishment whatever can be inflicted by any existing law* on the owner or proprietor of such tools for making Copper Money, nor upon the person in whose house they are found; and if when such search is made, there shall be found only *plain Half-pence*, or *Irish Harps*, or *Half-pence* or *Farthings* varying in the *Stamp* in any degree from the current Coin of the Realm, so as not to be of the exact similitude, the Act in question is defeated, inasmuch as the crime of felony does not attach to offences short of *Coining Money of the similitude of the current Coin of the Realm*. And hence it is that under all these fences against the punishment

punishment of the Law, the coinage of base Copper goes on with impunity; because it is the fault of the parties themselves if ever they permit the Law to reach them. ¶ *These defects merit immediate attention and amendment.*

9. The Laws now in being give no power to seize Counterfeit Half-pence either in the hands of the Dealers who keep a kind of open market at their own houses every morning to supply Jew Boys who cry Bad Shillings, as well as many others in various trades, who become the channels of circulation to a vast extent without risque or inconvenience. Neither does the Statute Law authorize the apprehension of Jew Boys, who go out every morning loaded with counterfeit Copper, which they exchange for Bad Shillings, to be afterwards coloured anew, and again put into circulation. ¶ *These defects also merit attention.*
10. Another very prominent evil in the execution of the Mint Laws, is the want of a proper fund for Prosecutions and Rewards, and other expences for detecting Offenders.—The Act of Queen Anne allowed £600. a year for this Purpose, which has never been increased by any parliamentary grant for a century; although the offences, as well as the expence of detection and prosecutions have increased at least Six-fold.—In this situation the energy of Magistrates in detecting Offenders is checked, and their exertions crippled for want of pecuniary Resources, or the means of refunding and rewarding those who
risque

risque their lives and expend their money in detecting Offenders.

Neither have sufficient rewards been provided for apprehending Offenders against the Mint Laws: The Reward of £40. is construed to be limited only to the Conviction of actual Coiners, and Clippers of Gold and Silver; and does not extend to colouring and finishing, as well as a number of other offences connected with *making, counterfeiting, and uttering Base Money*: the Reward for Copper Coin is limited to £10. which is no encouragement to Officers to do their Duty, ¶ *A liberal Sum ought to be allowed annually by Parliament for detections and prosecutions, and Rewards should be paid on the report of the Judges who try the offence according to the merit and trouble of the apprehenders and witnesses, whether there is a conviction or not.*

11. The Laws as they now stand are quite silent regarding what is called provincial Copper Coin or Tokens representing a Half-penny. If a new coinage of Copper Money is not resolved on by Government, it might be proper to legalize these *Tokens or Provincial Coins* on three Conditions. ¶ 1. *That the Copper of which they are made shall be pure.*—2. *That this Coin shall be at least 10 per cent. heavier than the Mint Coinage.*—3. *That the parties circulating such Coin be responsible to the holders for the value in Gold or Silver when demanded: and shall stamp their names and an obligation to that purpose on the Coins, Tokens, or Medals so issued by them.*—It would also be necessary that such persons as shall issue Tokens or
Medals

Medals shall take out a Licence for that purpose from the principal Officers of the Mint, as an authority for such Coinage, giving bond and security at the same time that such *Tokens*, or *Medals*, or *Provincial Coin* shall be 10 per cent. above the full weight specified for *one Penny*, *one Half-penny*, or *one Farthing* as the case may be, and likewise security to be accountable for the circulating value in Gold or Silver.

12. The Laws respecting foreign Coin are extremely defective, and productive at present of many frauds upon the Public.—Counterfeit French Shillings and Half-Crowns, as well as other foreign Coins, are made of base Metal, and mixed with counterfeit British Coin, to the injury of the Public. Foreigners are also cheated, to the disgrace of the National Character. *Prohibitions, Restraints, or Regulations, under Legislative Authority, have become absolutely necessary to prevent the Coinage, and the circulation of every kind of counterfeit Foreign Coin.*

In the mean time, however, as the mischiefs arising from base Coin have advanced to such a height, and as it is become necessary that all ranks of the community, but particularly people in those branches of trade where great quantities of Silver and Copper money must necessarily be taken in payment, should adopt such prudent and legal measures as may tend in some degree to prevent, or at least to check so enormous an evil, and shield themselves

selves from the losses which arise from the vast increase of base Silver and Copper Money which is daily thrown into circulation :—The following Advertisement is proposed.

A Caution to the Public respecting Base Silver and Copper Money.

And Rewards for detecting and apprehending Offenders.

“ WHEREAS it is manifest from the vast
 “ number of Coiners and Utterers of base Money,
 “ against whom informations have been lodged at
 “ the Public-Office in *Worship Street*, and with the
 “ Magistrates at Birmingham, and also from the in-
 “ creased quantities of counterfeit Silver and Cop-
 “ per Coin which has been recently circulated
 “ through a variety of different channels; that there
 “ are in this Metropolis, as well as in various parts
 “ of the Country, a great number of criminal peo-
 “ ple who are employed in *Coining, Selling, and Ut-*
 “ *tering* base Silver and Copper Money, to the great
 “ injury of the public, who are grossly cheated and
 “ deceived in consequence of the ingenious devi-
 “ ces which those fraudulent people have lately
 “ discovered in finishing base Money, so as in
 “ many

“ many respects to elude detection, particularly in
 “ Shillings and Sixpences, as well as smooth Half-
 “ pence, which are counterfeited in so masterly a
 “ manner as to render it difficult to distinguish
 “ this base Money from the current Coin of the
 “ Realm in its worn-out state, although a great
 “ proportion of such counterfeit Money is intrin-
 “ sically worth little or nothing.”

“ To remedy these inconveniences, frauds, and
 “ losses, to which the public are subjected, it has
 “ been determined by a Committee acting for the
 “ principal Traders and others in London, who have
 “ access in the course of their business to receive large
 “ quantities of Silver and Copper Coin, forthwith to
 “ place in the hands of the Solicitor to the Mint,
 “ such a sum of Money as shall be sufficient, not
 “ only to defray the expences of detecting *Coiners*,
 “ *Sellers*, and *Utterers* of base Money, so as to
 “ bring these different Offenders to justice; but
 “ also to be applied in rewarding all persons who
 “ shall be instrumental in apprehending and charg-
 “ ing these Offenders, and in proving the offences
 “ so charged; and which Rewards shall be paid in
 “ such proportions as shall appear to the Solicitor
 “ to the Mint to be a full compensation for the la-
 “ bour and risque of the parties, according to his
 “ usual practice in the like cases, whether a con-
 “ viction shall take place or not.”

“ And

“ And it is earnestly requested, that all persons,
 “ having any Informations to lodge against any
 “ *Coiners, Sellers, or Utterers* of base Money, will
 “ communicate the same to the Lord Mayor :—to
 “ the Magistrates at the Public-Office in *Worship-*
 “ *Street* :—or to the Magistrates at any other Pub-
 “ lic-Office, according to local circumstances, or
 “ as may be found most convenient.”

“ Hereby cautioning all persons, in the practice
 “ of receiving quantities of Silver or Copper Mo-
 “ ney in the course of their business, against the
 “ numerous Counterfeits now in circulation, and
 “ particularly counterfeit Half-pence, for the pur-
 “ pose of preventing or increasing those heavy
 “ Losses which must ultimately arise from the en-
 “ couraging, in any degree, the circulation of base
 “ Coin.”

In addition to this Advertisement, which should appear in most of the London and Country Papers as early as possible, with such alterations and amendments as shall be thought proper, or applicable to local circumstances : It would seem indispensibly necessary, not only that Subscriptions should be opened for rewarding those who shall detect Offenders : but also that Measures should be forthwith adopted by those who are most materially interested in suppressing the Evil, for the
 purpose

purpose of bringing the defects in the existing Laws under the review of the Members of His Majesty's Executive Government, that the same may be amended, modernized, and improved by a Bill to be brought in with their consent, and passed early in the ensuing Session of Parliament.

London, October 23, 1795.

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